

W.I.N. What Is Next?

A Biblical Prophecy Series (week 1)

Why teach on biblical prophecy? Isn't it impossible to know anything about what is going to happen in the Last Days or End Time?

Some prophecies in the Bible may be hard to understand or to apply; however, there are many prophecies that are clear, and we would be wise to listen to them.

So, we teach biblical prophecy because it:

Encourages us. It helps us in spite of how fearful and anxious the times may be, God has a plan to bring us through it all!

Focuses us. To be focused means to have maximum clarity upon an object. Prophecy helps us prioritize what matters most. When you know what matters most, you begin to live a purpose-driven life instead of a pleasure-driven life!!!

Warns us. Prophecy is a wake-up call! It reminds us that this world is not our home and we should not get comfortable thinking that it is.

Let's start this off with a warning from 2 Peter 3:3-8, *"Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. 4 They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created."5 They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. 6 Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. 7 And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. 8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment."* NLT

Jesus himself said no one knows the day or hour only the Father; however, notice

1 Thessalonians 5:1-5, *“Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don’t really need to write you. ² For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. ³ When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman’s labor pains begin. And there will be no escape. ⁴ But you aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night.”* NLT

We will not know the day or hour, but we can know the season and it will not surprise us because we are in the light and not in the darkness!

How can we know the season regarding biblical prophecy? The Bible gives us signs, specifically, signs of the End Times or Last Days.

What signs of the End Times or Last Days does the Bible give us?

Matthew 24:1-22, Mark 13:3-23, Luke 21:5-28 give us signs of the time.

International wars, revolutions, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, strange natural disasters, unpredictable oceanic events, worldwide teaching about Jesus Christ, persecution of Christians, and increased immorality.

- Number of Christians killed for their faith spikes by 80% in the last five years.
- 20th century was the bloodiest in history.
- Increased immorality = sexual, greed, lawlessness, etc.

Look at the signs that Paul gives Timothy in, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, *“You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. ⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!”* NLT

These are the signs of the times and there are certainly a lot of signs to look at.

Since we are children of the light and of the day, we can objectively look at the signs and say, "Yes, we are most definitely getting close to season of the End Times or Last Days.

If the last days are the 7 years of Tribulation, we are very close!!

There can be a lot of confusion as to the events of Last Days prophecies.

Timeline of Prophetic Events

It is important to know that there are not any unfulfilled prophecies that must happen before the Church is caught up or raptured to meet Jesus. When Israel became a nation in 1948, everything is in place.

Let's start with the first event on the timeline chart, the rapture.

Paul spoke about this to the Christians in the Greek city of Thessalonica. They were worried about their loved ones who had died before Christ returned.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

Regardless of how everything plays out in the end times; if you have faith in Jesus, you have a hope that is greater than anything that is going to happen!

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

When Jesus died for us on the cross, he was placed in a tomb, on the third day, God raised him from the dead. As a result, Jesus defeated death, hell, and the grave! He was the firstborn from the dead!

Now, when Christians die, their spirit and their soul goes immediately into the presence of God. When Jesus returns for the Church, the spirit, and souls of those who died in Christ are reunited with whatever scrap is left of their dead bodies.

15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the

archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves.

The Lord descends with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet call of God. Then, the bodies of those who died in Christ are resurrected and they will rise from wherever they were buried.

17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.

Those Christians who are living at the time of the rapture will then experience the same transformation of their bodies, they will rise up to meet those who had just been resurrected from the grave, and together we will meet Jesus in the air, then we will be with the Jesus forever.

18 So encourage each other with these words.“ NLT

So, encourage each other with this truth, with this reality, with this hope!

Do you see now how biblical prophecy encourages us, focuses us, and warns us?

The word rapture is not in the Bible but comes from the Latin word rapio, which means “caught up.” This is the Latin expression of the Greek word used by Paul when he said in I Thessalonians 4:17, *“Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be **caught up** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.*

The night before Jesus’ crucifixion, **Jesus had what is called the Last Super with his disciples.** They were still unaware for the most part of all that was about to happen.

Jesus no doubt shocked them when he told them He was going to be crucified. But Jesus promised them He would rise from the grave after 3 days. He would return to heaven but also promised to come back and get them.

John 14:1-3, *“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 **When everything is ready, I will come and get you**, so that you will always be with me where I am.”* NLT

1. He will come back from heaven.

2. The purpose for His return is to resurrect the dead in Christ and those who live for Jesus.

3. So they can spend eternity with Him.

Paul also explained to the Corinthian church what happens when a Christian dies because they were confused about it.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53, "What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. 51 But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! 52 It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. 53 For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies." NLT

Let's recap: The Sequence of rapture events will be as follows:

1. Christ will come down from heaven with a shout.
2. He will bring with Him the eternal spirits of all the Christians who have died.
3. The voice of the archangel will be heard.
4. At the trumpet call of God, bodies of all Christians who have died will be raised from the grave, with resurrected bodies!
5. Christians who are still alive will see their earthly bodies transformed into new resurrected bodies.

There will be a brief reunion in the sky between the previously dead Christians and the living Christians, then, they go upward to join Jesus Christ Himself.

What does a resurrected body look like?

Phil 3:21, "He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control." NLT

Here is what we do know a resurrected body will look like:

1. Jesus' body had a human shape.
2. He retained His individual identity. Mary recognized Him by His voice. John 20:16 He was recognized by sight on many other occasions.
3. His body was solid. No vapor or smoke, mystical body.
4. He ate food.
5. His body could dematerialize. Once Jesus suddenly appeared in the middle of room that had a closed door.

Some Christians also believe that the rapture happens mid-tribulation, and even post-tribulation.

Why I believe the rapture is pre-tribulation:

Revelation 3:10, *"Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world."* NLT

1 Thessalonians 5:9, *"For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us."* NLT

Luke 21:36, *"But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."* NLT

There is no specific mention of the church during the Tribulation. Chapters 1-3 mention Christians.

The Apostle Peter and Paul admonish Christians that they should anticipate this event.

2 Peter 3:9, *“The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”* NLT

Winston Churchill was a Believer. He planned his funeral which turned into a state funeral at the Queen’s command. “Churchill had planned that at the close of the service, a bugler positioned high up in the dome sounded ‘Taps:’ ‘Day is done, gone the sun’...Sounds like this TAPS but then immediately after, another bugler sounded ‘Reveille:’ REVEILLE ‘It’s time to get up in the morning!’ This was Winston Churchill’s testimony that at the end of our lives, the last note will not be ‘Taps,’ but ‘Reveille because of the hope we have in Jesus Christ!

What should you do in response to this message today?

1. Give your life to Jesus. Is there any other way?
2. Prioritize your life accordingly. What changes do you need to make?
3. Make your life count. We can help with that. Take your Next Steps information.
4. Be encouraged!

You win in Jesus! Live with joy in spite of the challenges of life.